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MISSIONARY RESEARCH

A BRIEF

# HISTORY

OF THE

Latin

*American*

*Lutheran*

*Mission*





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\*Denotes Executive Committee.

MAY 20 1953

## A BRIEF HISTORY of the Latin American Lutheran Mission

The LATIN AMERICAN LUTHERAN MISSION, with its Mission Field in Mexico, has its roots in the Colombia Evangelical Lutheran Mission of South America.

In 1927, Myrtle Nordin, of Lake Lillian, Minn., of the Lutheran Free Church, went to Colombia, South America, with an interdenominational Mission. She studied the language and labored there for two years in missionary work. While in Colombia, she became seriously ill with malaria and black water fever and so had to return to the homeland. But the Vision of the Gospel need of Latin America had been left in her soul!

At the same time as Miss Nordin was being burdened for Latin America, Christians from various Lutheran synods were banding themselves together for prayer in behalf of these people.

### COLOMBIA MISSION FOUNDED

After regaining her health, Miss Nordin again sought God's will for her life as a missionary. In an upper room in her parental home, she and a friend, Mrs. Alma Bratberg Sand, sought God's will in earnest prayer. The answer again was COLOMBIA. The two ladies later made a tour among the Lutheran Churches in the mid-west, presenting the cause of Missionary Work in South America. The response was so hearty and encouraging that the need was felt for a missionary organization. The COLOMBIA LUTHERAN MISSION was organized in Fergus Falls, Minn., in June, 1936, by a group of Christians who had assembled at the Lutheran Bible School during the annual meeting of the Hauge Innermission Federation. That same year, in November, Miss Nordin and Miss Marie Thompson, a nurse, were sent as the first missionaries to Colombia, sponsored by this new missionary organization.

After working for a number of months in SOATA. BOYACA, COLOMBIA, Miss Nordin suffered a sunstroke and after much prayer, was led to return home. In the meantime, five new missionaries were sent to the Field to carry on the Work which had been begun under Miss Nordin and Miss Thompson.

## NEW FIELDS

Returning home, Miss Nordin was not idle, but presented the cause of Latin America in the Lutheran Churches at home wherever she had opportunity. In 1939, she and a group of interested friends went to Texas. There they found what seemed to be a promising field in San Antonio. There Miss Nordin opened a Chapel and a Christian Book Store. From these headquarters, she contacted Mexicans who had come from Mexico and who had relatives across the Rio Grande river, for whom they were greatly concerned. She made several trips into Mexico and was finally led to open a Mission Field there and to establish a Bible Institute.



Myrtle Nordin Huerta, her husband, Porfirio, and their adopted daughter, Esther

### MYRTLE NORDIN HUERTA

Her original plan had been to start a Bible Institute in San Antonio, Texas, with students coming from Mexico. A small beginning was made. But the Mexican laws changed again, prohibiting students to leave their country. With two students who had come from Mexico to the States, she left for *General Teran*, a city in Nuevo Leon, in 1942. A permit was received from the government and on March 16th, the Lutheran Bible Institute was opened with ten students.

After some months, the government again changed its laws and the permit to continue with the Work of Bible Institute was abrogated. After consulting with the authorities, she found that the only ground on which she could remain to do missionary work in Mexico now, would be if she married a Mexican citizen, thereby securing the rights to apply for citizenship. This very thing took place. It was in 1943 that she was married to Senor Porfirio Huerta, a man of Spanish descent, of a fine Christian family.

The heat was intense in *General Teran*. Then came an encouraging invitation from the ex-governor of *Coahuila*, to come to *Saltillo* and establish the Work there. The elevation of *Saltillo* is between 5,000 and 6,000 feet above sea level and the climate is good. However, this is also the center of Gualalupe worship and the fanaticism of the citizenry is intense. There has been much persecution. Still God has blessed the Work and many souls have been saved there.

In the meantime, the Field of the Colombia Evangelical Lutheran Mission of South America, was transferred to the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in the fall of 1946. This left the Colombia Mission without a Field. The question now was, should the Mission disband or seek a new Field? A convention was called at Mitchell, South Dakota, November 29—Dec. 1, 1946. Mrs. Huerta was invited to present the cause of her Mission Work in Mexico. Up to this time, she had worked independently and was not connected with any missionary organization in the U. S. The corporation unanimously decided to assume responsibility for the support of the Field in Mexico with Mrs. Myrtle Nordin Huerta serving as the Director on the Field.

### MISSION POLICY

According to the laws of Mexico, it is illegal for *any* foreigner to do mission work in the land. This has closed the doors for outsiders and thrown the responsibility upon the natives. The LATIN AMERICAN LUTHERAN MISSION has consistently refused to send in missionaries under the subterfuge of a tourist pass. God has honored this stand. But Mrs. Huerta has the right of remaining in the country as well as working with the natives. God's wonderful guidance has been seen in this! She has a residential permit and also has received many of the rights and privileges of a native citizen.





The Mission Headquarters in Allende, Mexico. The Mission car in front. The entire area covers two acres where there is additional space for more building. An orchard with orange, lemon and grapefruit trees is in the back.



The "Confraternidad", a Fellowship meeting of the native missionaries and their families in the Mission Chapel in Villa Mainero, Tamp., Mexico.

## THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH

Therefore, the problem is to develop the native talent and build an *indigenous Church*. By careful work and prayer this is being accomplished through Bible training and practical work on the Field. Many pastors and lay people from the U. S. have visited the Field and all have been strangely gripped by the Apostolic simplicity of worship and the deep, fervent Spirit of revival found among these people.

### THE LUTHERAN BIBLE INSTITUTE

The Bible students are given a two year course of study, then sent out for a period of practical work during which time their work is carefully observed. All the workers are gathered once every three months for a week of CONFRATERNIDAD or Bible Conference, during which time the emphasis is laid on Bible study, prayer and fellowship. The various problems of the workers are prayerfully considered. The work has grown so much that it had to be divided into an Eastern and a Western Conference. At present, Senor Heriberto Huerta is the assistant director and also one of the missionaries of a main Mission and several smaller Stations.

### THE NATIONAL WORKERS' COUNCIL

THE NATIONAL WORKERS' COUNCIL is composed of all of the native missionaries of this Mission. *Senor Aristeo Huerta*, the father-in-law of Mrs. Huerta, is the chairman of this Council. He is truly the spiritual "Papa" (father) of the Mission Work. This native Council directs the Mission Work and its many problems directly. They are trusting God. They are clinging to His Word. They are loving lost souls unto Salvation. They have a strong discipline among themselves. All of the missionaries are tithers. From their tithing fund they support one of their own missionaries. They are doing all they can to raise their standard of living. They are doing all they can to promote the indigenous Church. The Women's Meetings, or SOCIEDAD FEMINIL, is composed of the wives of the missionaries and also other native Christians. This group, through much prayer, Bible Study, and personal effort, is doing much to raise the standard of the family life in Mexico. Through a strong love for one another and God's program for them, through a kind, but firm admonishment to grow in grace and holiness, the Gospel Work goes forward. Financially, the

status of the people is very pitiful. Eighty-nine percent of the population lives in extreme poverty or a mere marginal level. Living conditions are very primitive among those off the Pan-American highway.

### MISSION STATIONS AND MISSIONARIES

There are now twenty Main Gospel Stations and at least fifty smaller preaching places which are cared for by the twenty-eight native missionaries. All of these missionaries are married and have families. No single man is sent to a Mission Station alone. He works with another couple until he is married. From these Stations, a great number of villages are reached and thus, thousands have heard the Word of life who would otherwise have perished without Hope and Jesus Christ. Many of the people have learned to read and therefore the Work is made easier through the Bibles, tracts and other Christian literature which can be placed in homes. *There is a great hunger for the Word of God!* The lives of the missionaries are in constant danger. They suffer much persecution which is both subtle and open. Since the laws of Mexico bar all outsiders from missionary work in their country, the responsibility is thrust upon the natives. The native makes the best worker for many reasons. He is working lawfully. He is one of them in language, custom, standard of living, and practical appeal. Even if we from the U. S. were permitted to come there with the Gospel, it would be *very difficult* to live in many of these places.

### CHAPELS IN MEXICO

The laws of Mexico require every public place of worship to be held in a registered Chapel or Church. These places of worship must be built according to local standards and requirements. These Chapels, when completed, are registered, and become the property of the Mexican government. Due to these and other circumstances prevailing, we as a Mission aim to build only the simple places of worship. The standard of 89% of the people which is pitifully poor would not warrant any elaborate Chapels or Churches.

The LATIN AMERICAN LUTHERAN MISSION now has ten registered Chapels and two more are under construction in Mexico. There is a great need for more such Chapels and these are built as funds are available.

Every Chapel built there represents much sacrificial labor in prayer, and in work. Much per-



secution prevails, but still God's Word says, "The gates of hell shall not prevail—and also that His Word shall not return void."

### THE MISSIONARY ORGANIZATION

In September, 1947, the Colombia Mission Corporation met at Newark, Illinois for its annual Convention. Besides Mrs. Huerta, there were four native missionaries from the Field in Mexico present. A great interest in the Mission was manifested and a large offering was received for Chapels. The name of the Corporation was changed at this time to the LATIN AMERICAN LUTHERAN MISSION. The name of the official organ of the Mission was changed from "Celmosa Clarion," to *Latin American Clarion*.

Since then, a number of congregations as well as Mission groups and individuals have undertaken the support of the native missionaries and the various projects, such as the *Chapel Fund*, *Christian Literature*, *The Border Mission*, the *Bible Student-aid Fund*, the *monthly support of native missionaries*, and the *General Fund*. One of the major projects before the Mission now is the improvements of the Mission properties in *Allende, Mexico*, and *Laredo, Texas*. There is a growing need for Bibles and Christian literature. The Mission also has a vacant lot on which a Chapel should be erected soon, in Laredo. Plumbing is being installed in both Mission homes in Laredo, Texas.

### THE BORDER MISSION STATION

Laredo, Texas, is considered a gateway to Mexico, as the Pan-American highway enters Mexico through this border city. About 85% of the population in Laredo is Mexican. Mr. Claire Hobart arrived in Laredo, in January 1948, to start missionary work among the Mexicans there. He was assisted by Mr. Winnfield Turner. Misses Paula Iverson and Emma Twedt also labored there for some time and began a lasting work there. At present, the Border missionaries are: Mr. and Mrs. Sanford Haugen, and Mr. and Mrs. Claire Hobart.

The Haugens do much personal work, jail visitation, conduct Bible School and hold Gospel Services in their home. Used clothes and other household supplies are sent to Laredo and these supplies are taken care of by the Haugens. Some of these are distributed among the poor in Laredo, but most of them are used by our native missionaries in Mexico and the needy ones there.



Claire Hobart and some of his Spanish Braille students.  
(Mrs. Hobart, inset)

### SPANISH BRAILLE EVANGELISM

Mr. Claire Hobart is blind. He is a graduate of Gustavus Adolphus College, in St. Peter, Minn. He has mastered the Braille system in several languages. He is also a very gifted musician. He has composed the words and music for many hymns and Gospel songs, in English as well as Spanish. He and his wife teach the blind Mexicans to read and write in *Spanish Braille* and also teach them the Way of Salvation. Each

student, in turn, teaches another blind person to master the Braille and also the fundamentals of Christianity. They are transcribing a Bible Course in *Spanish Braille* for the *Lutheran Hour*.



Mr. & Mrs. Sanford  
Haugen, Border  
Missionaries



Senor and Senora Aristeo Huerta, president of the  
National Workers Council in Mexico



The Chapel in Nuevo Laredo, Tamp., Mexico

## THE CORPORATION

All of the officers and the home base workers of the Mission Corporation serve without remuneration. The Headquarters of the Mission is St. Paul's Lutheran Church, (ELC), 944 14th Ave. South, Minneapolis, Minn. This service is granted to the Mission gratis. Besides the Board of Directors, there is an Advisory Council. The present pastor, the Rev. Maynard G. Halvorson, is also a member of this Mission Board. The Mission is incorporated under the laws of Minnesota.

The field secretary of the Mission is Mr. Henry Aos, 116 South Spring, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. He is equipped with excellent colored moving pictures of the various Mission Stations. He has made a number of trips to our Field and is well informed with the Work. The Mission also has two sets of very good colored slides of the Work.

Mr. Gust I. Bergman, 895 Parkview Ave., St. Paul, Minn., is the faithful treasurer of the Mission. He too, has visited the Field in Mexico, and has a Vision for the Gospel there.

THE LATIN AMERICAN CLARION, the organ of the Mission, was published quarterly until 1947. Since 1947 it has been published bi-monthly and the editors are Mr. and Mrs. Leonard T. Ohnstad, St. Paul, Minn.

## THE CANADIAN TREASURER

Pastor Trygve F. Dahle, of Elbow, Sask., Canada, is well qualified to represent the Mission and serve as the Canadian treasurer. He was the treasurer of the Mission for two years, before going to Canada where he serves several congregations of the Lutheran Free Church.

## THE MISSION COUNCIL

The following have served on the Board or Advisory Council earlier in the Mission and helped much in establishing it: Pastor Benj. Ostrem, Newark, Ill.; Pastor Albin Larson, Guckeen, Minn.; Evangelist Philip Hanson, Minneapolis, Minn.; Mr. C. F. Erickson, Morris, Minn., and Mr. Arthur Nordin, Lake Lillian, Minn. Pastor J. O. Gisselquist, now on the Advisory Council, was the faithful secretary for a number of years.

To God be all the Glory, Praise, and Thanks.

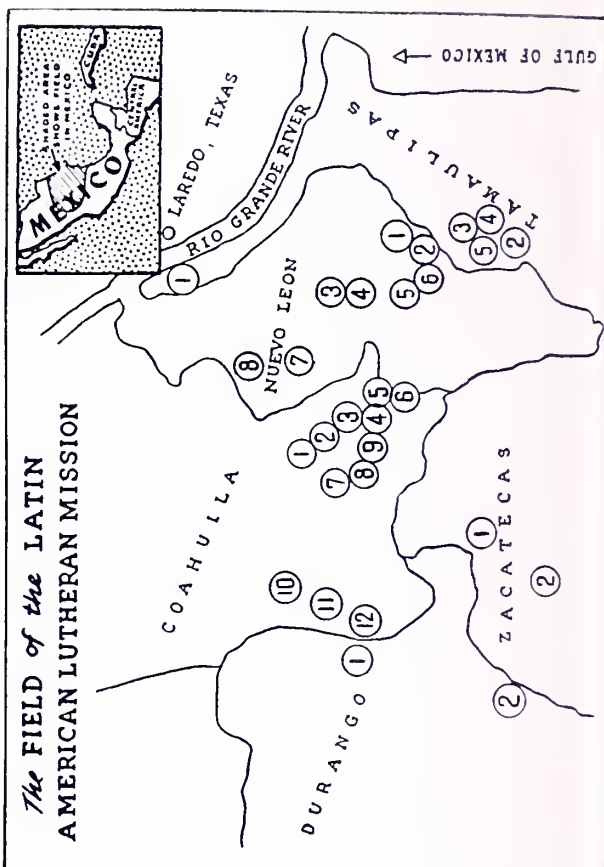
A. E. WINDAHL.

August 26, 1952.

## Mission Stations and Evangelists on the Field in Mexico

1. *Allende, San Antonio and Cascaras* in *Nuevo Leon*: Senor and Senora Aristeo Huerta in charge. Allende is the Headquarters and also has the *Lutheran Bible Institute* of the Mission. Myrtle Nordin Huerta supervises and directs the work of the mission stations. Her address is: Calle F. I. Madero-101, Colonia Zaragoza, Allende, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.
2. *Saltillo, and Agua Nueva*, in *Coahuila*: Senor and Senora Raimundo Garcia in charge.
3. *Villa Mainero, Jose Delgado and San Lorenzo*, in *Tamaulipas*: Senor and Senora Feliciano Lopez in charge.
4. *Villa de Santiago*, in *Nuevo Leon*: Senor and Senora Jose Cepeda in charge.
5. *El Potosi*, in *Nuevo Leon*: Senor and Senora Jose Cepeda in charge.
6. *El Pinal and San Pedro and La Boca*, in *Coahuila*: Senor and Senora Miguel Castillo in charge.
7. *Escobedo, Biznaga*, in *Coahuila*: Senor and Senora Guadalupe Martinez in charge.
8. *San Antonio, Santa Rita and Efanía*, in *Coahuila*: Senor Mathilde Silva in charge.
9. *General Teran, El Llano and Laguna*, in *Nuevo Leon*: Senor and Senora Ramon Bocanegra in charge.
10. *Huachichili, Galeras and Emergencia*, in *Coahuila*: Senor and Senora Agapito Soto in charge.
11. *El Nino Artillero, La Fama, Talleres, Monterrey and Santa Catarina* in *Nuevo Leon*: Senor and Senora Emigdio Santos and daughter, Ruth, in charge.
12. *Torreon*, in *Coahuila*, and *Gomez Palacios*, in *Durango*: Senor and Senora Eleazar Luna in charge. Senor Rafael Rivera is still in *Torreon*, but is very ill and helpless.
13. *Linares*, in *Nuevo Leon*: Senor and Senora Melecio Rongel in charge.
14. *Francisco y Madero* in *Coahuila*: Senor and Senora Gregorio Muniz in charge.
15. *Nuevo Laredo*, in *Tamaulipas*: Senor and Senora Heli-doro Huerta in charge. They are also in charge of the Manual Work for the Braille students of the Hobarts.
16. *Fresnillo*, in *Zacatecas*: Senor and Senora Heriberto Huerta in charge.
17. *Los Angeles*, in *Durango*: Senor and Senora Roberto Martinez in charge.
18. *San Pablo*, in *Nuevo Leon*: Senor and Senora Fortunato Alvarez in charge.
19. *San Pedro*, in *Coahuila*: Senor and Senora Bernardo Cortez in charge.
20. *Jerez*, in *Zacatecas*: Senor and Senora Blas Bocanegra in charge.





## KEY FOR THE MAP

### Tamaulipas

- \*1. Nuevo Laredo—and one out Station; 2. Villa Gran;  
\*3. Villa Mainero; 4. Jose Delgado; 5. San Lorenzo.

### Nuevo Leon

1. Linares—and one out Station; 2. Laguna; 3. Monterrey—and five out Stations; 4. Villa Santiago—and one out Station; 5. Allende Headquarters—and two out Stations; 6. El Liano—and two out Stations; \*7. San Pedro—and two out Stations; \*8. San Pablo.

### Coahuila

1. Saltillo; 2. Escobedo; \*3. San Antonio; 4. Agua Nuevo; 5. Escobedo; 6. Emergencia; \*7. Galeras; \*8. Huachicle; \*9. El Potosi—and one out Station; \*10. San Pedro; \*11. Francisco Madero; 12. Torreon.

### Zacatecas

1. Fresnillo; 2. Jerez.

### Durango

1. Gomez Palacio; 2. Los Angeles.

\*Registered Chapel in this Station.



Mr. Henry Aos, 116 South Spring, Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Mr. Aos is the field secretary of the *Latin American Lutheran Mission*.



This ox team and driver are hauling a load of rock used in the building of the Chapel in *Huachichle, Coahuila, Mexico*, in 1948. This mode of transportation is common in the remote regions.

